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Giorgio Rota



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- 1 This article is a short excursus on the topic of fantastic literature (bestiaries, imaginary geography and ethnology), where the Author presents and comments several excerpts from Safavid and Ottoman sources, in transliteration and French translation. As far as Safavid literature is concerned, a long passage from Bijan's manuscript *History of Shah Ismail* (British Library Ms Or 3,248, also known as *Ross Anonymous*) comprises almost half of the entire article (pp. 31-42), recounting the story of a skirmish between Qizilbash and "Abyssinian" warriors in Mamluk service in 1512, and the victory of the former. Certainly owing to the distance between the events and the writing of the *History*, and to the exotic character of the Abyssinians, the latter are described by Bijan as a sort of monstrous creature comparable to the *dīvs* of Persian tradition, and as such they are painted in the miniature accompanying the text. Despite the fabulous tone of the narration and its being unknown to Safavid chronicles, the episode seems to be indirectly confirmed by a Mamluk source. Interestingly, the Qizilbash commander is a certain Deli Duraq, and a Deli Duraq appears (fighting on the Ottoman side) on a miniature, depicting the battle between the Ottoman forces and the rebels led by Shah Vali in 1520, from a manuscript of

Sa'doddin's *Tacu-ttevarih* (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Supp. turc 524). The Author does not claim that the two Deli Duraqs are one and the same person, but the coincidence is certainly suggestive. This episode is unknown to the Safavid historical chronicles but appears in a manuscript in Dublin which was only recently recognized as another "history of Shah Esma'il": cf. Barry D. Wood, "The *Tarikh-i Jahanara* in the Chester Beatty Library: An Illustrated Manuscript of the 'Anonymous Histories of Shah Isma'il'", *Iranian Studies*, 37, 1, 2004, pp. 89-107 (see the abstract n° 214): here the Qizilbash commander is called Morād Beyg.

- 2 The following two excerpts are much shorter (pp. 42-45), and they are taken from ʰw āndamīr's *Ḥabīb as-siyar*. Curiously, they show a description of the Atlantic Ocean which is by and large correct and influenced by the Portuguese discoveries (less than thirty years after Bartolomeu Diaz passed the Cape of Good Hope, which is mentioned – of course not with this name), as opposed to a largely imprecise and fanciful description of the much closer and more familiar Black Sea.

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Thèmes : 4.2.1. Safavides et Qājārs

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